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General Assembly

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Committee on Conferences
Organizational session for 2000

Annotated provisional agenda for the organizational session for 2000

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2000.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organization of work for 2000.
4. Programme of work for 2000.
5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2000.
6. Review of the procedure on the participation of observers.
7. Other business.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2000

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that thenceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

3. Organization of work for 2000

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating to documentation in even-

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numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

At its organizational session for 1999, on 21 April 1999, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1999 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2000 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2000.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly are to be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 2000

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988.

Annexed to the present document is a draft agenda for the substantive session of 2000, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly.

In determining the timing and duration of its substantive session of 2000, the Committee's attention is drawn to paragraph 23 of section B of General Assembly resolution 54/248, in which the Assembly requested the Committee to consider the possibility of holding its substantive session of 2000 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2000

6. Review of the procedure on the participation of observers

7. Other business

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

Annex

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 2000

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   (a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001;
   (b) Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:
      (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;
      (ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;
      (iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;
      (iv) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;
      (v) Improved coordination of conference services;
   (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243.
3. Documentation and publication-related matters:
   (a) Distribution of documentation;
   (b) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits;
   (c) United Nations publications.
4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters:
   (a) Use of remote interpretation;
   (b) Utilization of new technologies.
5. Information technology.
6. Organization of work.
7. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001

A draft revised calendar for 2001 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2000.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

The Committee has studied annually a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing resources by United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested that Nairobi be included in all analytical tables for future reports when data for the three-year period was available. The Committee also requested that the organs be listed in the order of their utilization factors and that the utilization factors for a three-year period be provided in the report so that trends in the utilization factors of various bodies could be easily identified.

In compliance with the foregoing requests, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee at its substantive session of 2000 a report on meeting statistics of United Nations organs.

(ii) Consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested its Chairperson to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. In paragraph 7 of section B of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly requested the Chairperson of the Committee to transmit a letter to the chairpersons of all bodies that had utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated conference resources in the previous year, informing them of the problem and drawing their attention to the significant loss of meeting time, with a view to encouraging appropriate action on their part so as to improve the utilization of conference-servicing resources.

An oral report will be presented on the matter.

(iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In paragraph 11 of section B of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 2000-2001 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session through the Committee a report on the implementation of that decision. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested the Secretariat to include in future reports a breakdown on the item of the requests by regional groups.

The Secretariat will provide a written report in compliance with the above requests.

(iv) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In paragraph 16 of section B of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly urged all subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission on Human Settlements, and encouraged Member States, intergovernmental bodies and regional and other major groupings to increase their use of the conference facilities at Nairobi. In paragraph 17, the Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to assist the aforementioned bodies in improving this situation, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session through the Committee on the actions taken to that end. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee also requested the Secretariat to prepare detailed proposals on the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, including by non-United Nations entities.

A written report will be submitted in compliance with the above requests.

(v) Improved coordination of conference services

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure closer cooperation between Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to improve the coordination of conference services. In paragraph 16, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to engage on a regular basis in an active dialogue with Member States as a permanent feature at Headquarters, as well as the United Nations offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. This request was reiterated by the Committee at its substantive sessions of 1997, 1998 and 1999, and in paragraph 26 of section B of its most recent resolution 54/248 on the pattern of conferences, the General Assembly encouraged the Secretariat to continue further the active dialogue between conference services and the secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, with a view to improving the provision of conference services.

As part of the coordination efforts, the Committee requested at its substantive session of 1999 that the videoconference between the four duty stations held each year during the Committee's substantive session be included in the agenda for the next substantive session, and suggested that its timing at the start of the session would enable members to make more effective use of the information provided.

Moreover, in paragraph 28 of section B of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to update the administrative instruction of 8 May 1987 on guidelines for the preparation of host Government agreements falling under General Assembly resolution 40/243 (ST/AI/342).

The Secretariat will take appropriate measures to comply with the above requests.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, in which it had decided

that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences.

A conference room paper on the requests received in this regard will be prepared by the Secretariat for consideration by the Committee.

3. Documentation and publication-related matters

(a) Distribution of documentation

In paragraph 14 of section C of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly urged intergovernmental bodies, when feasible, to become more actively involved in rationalizing their meeting schedules in order to ensure the timely distribution of all related documentation, and requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals based on the reviews through the Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

The Secretariat will prepare a written report in compliance with the above request.

(b) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits

At its 1998 substantive session, the Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it should stress once again the need for compliance with the existing page limits. The Committee again invited all intergovernmental bodies to consider, where appropriate, the possibility of further reducing the length of their reports from 32 to 20 pages. It also called on the Secretariat to make its procedures for obtaining waivers to the 16-page rule more rigorous, maintaining however the necessary degree of flexibility, with a view to encouraging author departments to reduce the length of their submissions while maintaining high standards of quality. In addition, the Committee requested the Secretariat to submit to it, every two years, updated information on the number and length of documents.

In paragraphs 15 and 16 of its resolution 53/208 B, the General Assembly endorsed the above recommendations of the Committee, and in paragraph 17 requested the Secretariat to submit to the Committee, every two years, updated information on the number and length of documents.

The Secretariat will prepare a written report on the subject.

(c) United Nations publications

In paragraph 7 of its resolution 54/259 entitled "United Nations publications: enhancing cost-effectiveness in implementing legislative mandates", the General Assembly regretted that the provision contained in paragraph 45 of annex II to its resolution 52/220 had not been implemented, and requested the Secretary-General to implement that provision as a matter of priority and report to it at its fifty-fifth session in the context of the item entitled "Pattern of conferences".

A conference room paper on the subject will be prepared.

4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters

(a) Use of remote interpretation

At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee commended the efforts of the Secretariat to develop a system of remote interpretation and looked forward to additional experiments in the future. The Committee requested the Secretariat to further refine the cost considerations of remote interpretation, taking into account not only technological possibilities but also the cost benefits of remote interpretation, including the relative cost advantages of the different conference centres that were likely providers of remote interpretation services, and to report thereon. Furthermore, in paragraph 5 of section D of its resolution 54/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep under review the introduction and use of any new technology, in particular remote interpretation, and to report thereon to the General Assembly on a regular basis.

The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(b) Utilization of new technologies

In paragraph 1 of section D of resolution 54/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue the efforts to utilize new technologies, such as computer-assisted translation, remote translation, terminology databases and speech recognition, in the six official languages so as to enhance further the productivity of conference services, and to keep the General Assembly informed of the introduction and use of any other new technology. At its substantive session of 1999, the Committee requested the Secretary-General to provide more specific data on the impact of anticipated gains in productivity on the need for temporary assistance, notably through the introduction of new technologies.

The Secretariat will report on the status of the introduction of new technologies.

5. Information technology

In paragraph 1 of section E of resolution 54/248, the General Assembly noted the request of the Committee on Information that the Secretary-General continue to develop and enhance the United Nations web sites in all the official languages of the Organization and continue to develop proposals for consideration by the Committee on Information at its next session, in May 2000. In paragraph 4, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the goal of the equal treatment of the six official languages was taken into account in the course of the continuous development, maintenance and enrichment of United Nations web sites.

A report on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web sites (A/AC.198/2000/7-A/AC.172/2000/4) will be submitted to the Committee of Information at its substantive session of 2000 in compliance with the above requests. The report will be made available to the Committee on Conferences.

6. Organization of work

7. Adoption of the report